



AP Exclusive: Manafort firm received Ukraine ledger payout

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WASHINGTON (AP) — Last August, a handwritten ledger surfaced in Ukraine with dollar amounts and dates next to the name of Paul Manafort, who was then Donald Trump's campaign chairman. Ukrainian investigators called it evidence of off-the-books payments from a pro-Russian political party.

But Manafort, who worked for the party as an international political consultant, has publicly questioned the ledger's authenticity — saying no public evidence existed that he or others received payments recorded in it.



Now, financial records newly obtained by The Associated Press confirm that at least \$1.2 million in payments listed in the ledger next to Manafort's name were actually received by his U.S. consulting firm. They include payments in 2007 and 2009, providing the first evidence that Manafort's firm received at least some money listed in the so-called Black Ledger.

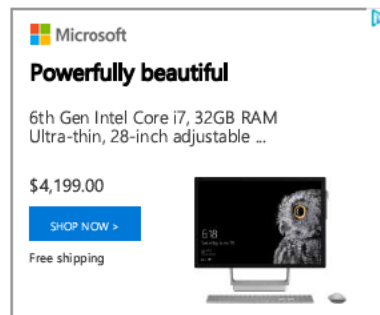
The two payments came years before Manafort became involved in Trump's campaign, but for the first time bolster the credibility of the ledger. They also put the ledger in a new light, as federal prosecutors in the U.S. have been looking into Manafort's work for years as part of an effort to recover Ukrainian assets stolen after the 2014 ouster of Ukrainian President Viktor Yanukovich, who fled to Russia. No charges have been filed as part of the investigation.

Separately, Manafort is also under scrutiny as part of congressional and FBI investigations into possible contacts between Trump associates and Russia's government under President Vladimir Putin during the 2016 U.S. presidential campaign. The payments are unrelated to the election.

In statements to the AP, Manafort did not deny that his firm received the money but said "any wire transactions received by my company are legitimate payments for political consulting work that was provided. I invoiced my clients and they paid via wire transfer, which I received through a U.S. bank."

Manafort noted that he agreed to be paid according to his "clients' preferred financial institutions and instructions." Manafort said he had never been paid in cash for his work in Ukraine.

On Wednesday, his spokesman, Jason Maloni, said he believes Manafort's exclusive use of wire transfers for payment undermines descriptions of the ledger last year by Ukrainian anti-corruption authorities and a lawmaker that said the ledger detailed cash payments.



The AP identified in the records two payments received by Manafort that aligned with the ledger: one for \$750,000 that a Ukrainian lawmaker said last month should be investigated by U.S. authorities.

The other was \$455,249 and also matched a ledger entry.

The AP provided to Manafort the amounts of the payments, dates and number of the bank account where they were received. Manafort told the AP that he was unable to review his own banking records showing receipt of the payments because his bank destroyed the records after a standard seven-year retention period.

The newly obtained records expand the global scope of Manafort's financial activities related to his Ukrainian political consulting, because both payments came from companies once registered in the Central American country of Belize. Last month, the AP reported that the U.S. government has examined Manafort's financial transactions in the Mediterranean country of Cyprus as part of its probe.

Manafort, a longtime Republican political operative, led the presidential campaign from March until August last year when Trump asked him to resign. That came after a tumultuous week in which The New York Times revealed that Manafort's name appeared in the Ukraine ledger — although the newspaper said at the time that officials were unsure whether Manafort actually received the money — and after the AP separately reported that he had orchestrated a covert Washington lobbying operation until 2014 on behalf of Ukraine's pro-Russian Party of Regions.

On Wednesday, Maloni told the AP that Manafort intends to register with the Justice Department as a foreign agent for that work. By registering retroactively, Manafort will be acknowledging that he failed to properly disclose his work to the Justice Department as required by federal law.

Also Wednesday, one of the Washington lobbying firms involved in that covert campaign, the Podesta Group Inc., formally registered under the Foreign Agents Registration Act. The firm, run by the brother of Hillary Clinton presidential campaign chairman John Podesta, reported being paid more than \$1.2 million for its efforts. It cited unspecified "information brought to light in recent months" and conversations with Justice Department employees as the reason for its decision. The other firm, Mercury LLC, said it also will register soon, after the fact.

Officials with the Ukrainian National Anti-Corruption Bureau, which is investigating corruption under Yanukovich, have said they believe the ledger is genuine but said they had no way of knowing whether Manafort received the money. The bureau said it wasn't investigating Manafort because he is not a Ukrainian citizen.

Last month, Ukrainian lawmaker Serhiy Leshchenko revealed an invoice bearing the letterhead of Manafort's namesake company, Davis Manafort, that Leshchenko said was crafted to conceal a payment to Manafort as a purchase of 501 computers. Leshchenko said last month the 2009 invoice was one of about 50 pages of documents found in Manafort's former Kiev office by a new tenant.

On Tuesday, Manafort called the invoice a fraud. "The signature is not mine, and I didn't sell computers," Manafort said, noting that he believes people are taking "disparate pieces of information and distorting their significance through a campaign of smear and innuendo."

Associated Press writers Nataliya Vasilyeva contributed reporting from Kiev and Moscow, and Lynn Berry from Washington.